SCOMM

70:3

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HIGH SEAS
SALMON INTERCEPTION
March 1, 1990
3:40 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lloyd Jones, Co-Chairman
Senator Johne Binkley, Co-Chairman
Senator Dick Eliason
Senator Jack Coghill
Senator Arliss Sturgulewski
Senator Fred Zharoff

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Mike Szymanski

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Overview of High Seas Salmon Interception Negotiations

WITNESS REGISTER

David Benton, Director
External and International Fisheries Affairs
Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 3-2000
Juneau, Alaska 99802-2000

Bill Wolf, Legislative Aide
Senator Frank Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

ACTION NARRATIVE
TAPE 1, SIDE 1
Number 001

Senator Jones called the Senate Special Committee on High Seas Salmon Interception to order at 3:40 p.m. He introduced David Benton, Director of External and International Fisheries Affairs for the Department of Fish and Game, to give an overview of high seas salmon interception negotiations.
Mr. Benton listed the documents and memos which ne submitted to the committee. He said the Driftnet Act required the United States to enter into negotiations and seek agreements for the effective monitoring and enforcement of the high seas driftnet fleets in the North Pacific - with Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. We now have agreements with all three nations.

Starting with Taiwan, Mr. Benton said, they have agreed to have 100% satellite transmitter coverage of their fleet. The agreement also established fourteen U.S. and ten Taiwanese observers in the fleet. They also agreed to a charter vessel that would be a roving platform with three U.S. and two Taiwanese scientific observers on board to monitor the fleet in a more random fashion. Mr. Benton said they are still trying to work out how many boats will be fishing with drift nets.

Going on to Korea, Mr. Benton said, they agreed to 100% satellite transmitters, boundaries, and thirteen U.S. observers on their fleet of 150 vessels. There are currently problems with the logistical details of the observer program, but they are being worked out.

The agreement with Japan calls for an observer program, but they are resistant to satellite transmitters. Negotiations currently being conducted in Washington D.C. and Tokyo are covering satellite transmitters, boundaries, and number of observers for the driftnet fleets. Another subject that will be covered is the conversion of the mother ship directed salmon fishery to a land based style operation.

Mr. Benton said they are also discussing proposals on the squid and large mesh tuna fleet that would include roughly fifty U.S. observers, 100% transmitter coverage, boundary restrictions, increased enforcement on the tuna fleet, and status quo enforcement on the squid fleet.

According to Mr. Benton, the United Nations passed a resolution in September regarding the albacore tuna fleet in the South Pacific. Alaska Department of Fish and Game initiated communications with leaders of several South Pacific countries and worked out a North/South strategy for approaching this issue on a more global basis recognizing mutual opponents and mutual concerns. New Zealand and the U. S. came up with a resolution directed at a scientific review of the effects of driftnet fishing in June 1991 and a possible moratorium in the North Pacific on driftnet fishing in June of 1992.

Number 450

Senator Sturgulewski thought that the committee could develop a resolution strongly supporting this measure. Mr. Benton said the most important thing was to get observers out there in 1990 to document what is going on so that can be used as evidence when negotiating.

Number 500

In May 1988 the United States and the USSR signed a memorandum of agreement on fisheries which called for broad

cooperation in fisheries matters including salmon. It established a North Pacific and Bering Sea Advisory Body which would provide input to the State Department and the Department of Commerce. The Advisory Body drafted a new salmon regime for the North Pacific that would ban fishing for salmon on the high seas, establish a mechanism for having some significant cooperation between the USSR and the U. S. to deal with the squid fleets, and establish a scientific mechanism for developing information to support those kinds of efforts. The agreement is now ready to take to Japan and Canada.

The Canadians are very supportive of what we are doing. The Japanese have remained completely silent.

Mr. Benton said he is currently working on a draft proposal dealing with the doughnut hole which would set a cap on the amount of fish that can be harvested there and would allow the fishing nations to allocate some of that catch amongst themselves.

Number 575

Senator Sturgulewski asked what was known about the interconnection between the doughnut hole and the bottomfish catch for the USSR and the U.S. Mr. Benton replied that they have sent a proposal to Leningrad to establish a bilateral group that would gather all the available information on that subject and then come up with a series of recommendations to the two countries. There is consensus between the two countries as of November that the fish in the doughnut hole originate in the two countries. The two countries agreed that there is a substantial connection between the two, that there is no independent stock of fish in the doughnut hole. They agreed as to the impact on fisheries in the doughnut and came up with a rationale for establishing an appropriate harvest level in the "hole." According to the data, the Bering Sea fishery is being overharvested by 700,000 metric tons per year.

Number 680

Senator Sturgulewski asked if the North Pacific Fisheries Council was doing anything about this and if there was any connection to the depletion of the sea lion population. Mr. Benton said there was a very tenuous connection between overfishing and the depletion in sea lion and fur seal populations.

Number 731

Bill Wolf, Senator Murkowski's legislative assistant, thanked everyone for their help on this issue and said it looked like they were making headway. Although, he said,

last year's agreement with Japan was extremely unsatisfactory, they are working on a much stronger one for this year. They are working on an observer program with Korea now. Taiwan has sent a very low ranking delegation to discuss this issue, but they did work out an observer program of 14 U.S. observers to be out 45 days each and 10 Taiwanese observers to be out 60 days each. He said that the National Marine Fisheries Service has assured them that that would provide 95% statistic reliability of the data.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2
Number 001

Mr. Wolf said there was a question, though, as to how boats would fish without observers on them.

Admiral Leland of the Coast Guard has assured them that they will double the amount of time they spend in the North Pacific.

Mr. Wolf said they have some concerns with the sori vessels which may carry driftnets. They would be required to carry transmitters according to a verbal agreement we have with an official in Taipei. We would monitor those vessels very closely.

Mr. Wolf said that we need to set an overall policy instead of chasing boats all over the ocean as they are reflagged. He said within the next few days he expects legislation to be introduced directing the State Department to negotiate with salmon purchasing nations to require a certificate of legal origin for any salmon shipments or anadromous fish products.

Mr. Benton said because the Bering Sea is mostly Soviet and and American waters we are cooperating on putting together a conservation proposal which can be taken to Japan, Korea, Poland, and China. If they oppose the proposal, the stage is then set for bilateral action to try to do something.

Senator Jones thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.